United Nations A/57/695

General Assembly

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Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 25 (a)
Oceans and the law of the sea: oceans and the law of the sea

Letter dated 12 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to request your assistance in having the attached statement (see annex) circulated to Member States as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 25 (a).

(*Signed*) Anthony C. **Rolle**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

02-75795 (E) 271202

Annex to the letter dated 12 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of the Bahamas to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Mr. President:

With reference to the comments made by the Permanent Representative of Spain to the United Nations in his statement this morning on agenda item 25, entitled "Oceans and the law of the sea", I wish to take this opportunity to place on record the position of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas with respect to the sinking of the *Prestige* and the oil spill off of the coast of Spain.

The Bahamas deeply regrets the environmental and social damage occasioned by the sinking of the *Prestige*. However, it wishes to assure this Assembly that The Bahamas' action in respect of the *Prestige* was fully in accordance with its respect for the marine environment and its responsibility as flag State. The Bahamas remains fully cognizant of its responsibilities as a flag State and its actions demonstrate the commitment of the Government to preserve its integrity.

The records show that, with respect to the condition of the vessel, the vessel was subjected to a special survey in China in 2001, and in May 2002, a further survey was undertaken which indicated that there were no statutory deficiencies and no outstanding class recommendations. Every indication, therefore, showed that the vessel was in sound condition.

The Bahamas is committed to continuing its efforts to upgrade shipping standards and ensure the integrity of its ship registry.

The Bahamas has initiated a series of measures designed to deal with the fundamental causes of accidents involving structural failures, especially in tankers and bulk carriers, and had introduced these measures at the International Maritime Organization even prior to the *Prestige* incident.

The Government of The Bahamas reiterates that maritime safety remains of critical importance, and has consequently launched a thorough investigation of the causes and circumstances surrounding the *Prestige* loss.

We wish to note that at present all indications are that repairs to the ship were carried out to the highest industry standards, but our investigation team will be exploring all other matters pertaining to the vessel, including with respect to its design and age.

The Bahamas continues to fulfil all of its international obligations under the appropriate conventions and we would urge the concerned States that they, too, should take the action required by them in fulfilment of their obligations under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other international conventions, in order to ensure the preservation of the marine environment.

12 December 2002

United Nations A/57/696

General Assembly

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24 December 2002
English
Original: Spanish

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 109 (b)
Human rights questions: human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms

Letter dated 3 December 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Ecuador to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the speeches made at the ceremony at which the Franklin D. Roosevelt International Disability Award was presented to the Government of my country, in the person of Mr. Gustavo Noboa, Constitutional President of the Republic of Ecuador (see annexes I, II and III).

I should be grateful if these documents could be issued as official documents of the General Assembly, under the item "Human rights questions, including alternative approaches for improving the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms".

(*Signed*) Luis **Gallegos**
Permanent Representative

02-75818 (E) 030103 060103

Annex I

[Original: Spanish]

Speech made by Mr. Gustavo Noboa Bejarano, President of the Republic of Ecuador

Acceptance of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award

New York, 19 September 2002

On behalf of the Government and people of Ecuador, I am pleased to greet the United Nations, through the Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Iqbal Riza, and to convey to it my sincere congratulations for its commitment to the noblest causes of humankind in these uncertain and unsettling times.

I have been invited to New York and to the United Nations today in recognition of the work done by many women and men in my country, and it is an honour for me to accept, on behalf of the people and Government of my country, the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Award which is given to individuals and institutions that devote their best efforts to helping people with disabilities.

In addition to recognizing the work of parents, the National Council for the Disabled, whose President Mr. Rodrigo Crespo is with us here today, and governmental and non-governmental organizations in Ecuador, the Award calls to mind the courage of a man who was able to turn adversity into a challenge and crisis into opportunity. I am referring to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt who, undaunted by personal suffering, led this great nation on the path to progress, spearheaded the defence of democracy and freedom in the dark days of the Second World War and was a visionary architect in the creation of the indispensable universal forum that is the United Nations.

According to United Nations statistics, approximately 10 per cent of the world's population has some form of disability.

This means that we are faced with a serious problem, particularly in countries such as Ecuador that have a predominantly young population, since those most affected are boys and girls living in the greatest poverty, and the mechanisms for integration and equal opportunity are complex, long term and very costly.

In the 1950s, a movement on behalf of disabled persons began to emerge in Ecuador, especially through the efforts of parents and some professionals who were beginning to get involved in the issue.

It was in the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, that Ecuador took the important step of adopting a National Plan on Disabilities and also a Disabilities Act (Act No. 180) establishing the National Council for the Disabled, the lead agency for disability policy, which promotes research and coordinates the actions of private and public sector bodies. Since all sectors are represented, the Council's Board is made up of the chairmen of the four national federations representing persons with disabilities.

As I mentioned earlier, we now have a highly advanced body of legislation which offers greater opportunities for the genuine integration in society of persons with disabilities or, more accurately, persons with different abilities.

We are also working on the prevention of disability through programmes such as prenatal care, safe pregnancy, vaccination against preventable diseases, a campaign against traffic accidents and the complete elimination of leaded gasoline. The theory and practice of inclusive education are making progress in Ecuador and access for the disabled to the physical environment is now required in all municipalities, some of which are already implementing this requirement.

This does not mean that the problem has been solved, but we are making steady progress in raising society's awareness and alerting it to the issue, ensuring recognition of the rights and equal opportunities of disabled persons, strengthening associations and federations of disabled persons and improving their quality of life. There is a willingness to continue lifting the veil of invisibility and indifference which characterized the approach to this issue that affects all countries.

Mr. Representative of the Secretary-General and members of the Committee of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Award:

I am pleased to inform you that in order to optimize the use of the $50,000 Award, the National Council for the Disabled invited non-governmental organizations from throughout the country to participate in an open, transparent competition to propose projects for the prevention of physical, sensory, mental and psychological deficiencies and disabilities.

The Fundación de Asistencia Psicopedagogica a los Niños, Adolescentes y Adultos con Retardado Mental (FASINARM) is the non-governmental organization that presented the best project for the use of those resources. Since the 1960s, FASINARM has been working for inclusion and equal opportunities for intellectually disabled persons, for whom it has developed services ranging from early stimulation and schooling to vocational training, in addition to providing information, training and technical assistance to the community and promoting the institution-building of public and private bodies and networks in the social sector.

The contribution of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Foundation will support the development of the project "For the right to inclusion. A proposal to strengthen the inclusive trend in our country". Moreover, as you know, one of the serious problems facing persons with musculo-skeletal deficiencies is mobility in the physical environment. Thanks to the 1,000 wheelchairs kindly donated by Mr. Kenneth Behring, founder of the Wheelchair Foundation, which form part of the Award presented to us today, 1,000 families will have the satisfaction of seeing their loved ones regain their freedom of movement.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Mr. Behring, who is here with us today, for his noble and very useful donation.

I would also like to express my great appreciation to the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and the World Committee on Disability for their useful work, which sets an inspiring example of commitment. In particular, I should like to thank Mr. Alan Reich and Mrs. Anne Roosevelt, who are here with us today.

Your joint efforts on behalf of one of humankind's most important causes, embodied in this magnificent Award, raises international awareness and helps more societies forward in respecting the rights of all persons, combating discrimination, accepting differences and ensuring equal opportunities for all.

Annex II

[Original: English]

Secretary-General praises Ecuador as "richly deserved" recipient of 2002 Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award

Following is Secretary-General Kofi Annan's message at the presentation of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award, delivered by Iqbal Riza, Chef de Cabinet, in New York on 19 September:

I am very delighted to convey my warmest greetings on the occasion of this year's Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award. Since it was established in 1995, to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, this award has highlighted the shared endeavour of Governments, the United Nations, civil society and the private sector to improve the lives of disabled people everywhere.

I am pleased that this ceremony will benefit from the presence of so many distinguished people, including Christopher Reeve, who has done so much to advance understanding and awareness of the cause of the disabled worldwide.

The enjoyment by all people of all human rights, including the full participation of persons with disabilities in society and development, goes to the heart of the work of the United Nations.

This has been so throughout the history of the Organization, from the Charter of the United Nations to the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons; from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the Declaration of the World Summit for Social Development.

The goals of the United Nations in the twenty-first century are summed up in the Millennium Declaration, a blueprint for improving the lives of all the world's people, as expressed in a set of precise, time-bound targets agreed by all the world's countries.

Those targets, the Millennium development goals, whether the eradication of poverty, the achievement of universal primary education or the promotion of global partnership, are central to improving the lives of people with disabilities and to helping them pursue an active role in all aspects of development.

The recipient of this year's Franklin Delano Roosevelt Award, Ecuador, has long been at the forefront of the movement for equal opportunities for disabled people and for their full participation in society. More than a decade ago, the Government of Ecuador approved a national plan on disabilities and created its National Council to coordinate policies for both the private and public sector.

Mr. President, yours was one of the first countries, not only in Latin America but worldwide, to include the rights of people with disabilities in its Constitution, and to provide legal instruments to uphold those rights. Several ground-breaking non-governmental organization projects in Ecuador have received support from the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability, which backs actions to promote the rights of persons with disabilities worldwide.

Señora Baquerizo de Noboa, allow me also to pay tribute to your tireless and dedicated work as ambassador for people with disabilities in your country. And here

at the United Nations, to Ambassador Luis Gallegos of Ecuador, who serves as the very able Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, which met for the first time in July.

And so I am delighted to congratulate the people and Government of Ecuador on receiving the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award for 2002. It is richly deserved. I hope many more will follow your example.

Annex III

[Original: English]

Presentation of the Franklin D. Roosevelt International Disability Award to the Republic of Ecuador and President Gustavo Noboa

United Nations, New York

Remarks of Alan A. Reich, Chairman
World Committee on Disability
19 September 2002

Today, for the sixth time, we gather to present the Franklin D. Roosevelt International Disability Award, this year to the Republic of Ecuador, a nation that has responded vigorously to the United Nations call to all countries on behalf of the world's 600 million people with disabilities.

Yes, there are 600 million of us, according to the United Nations. Eighty-five per cent live in the developing world where, because of poverty, they are doubly disabled. Most face intolerable prejudice and discrimination. This silent, growing crisis has many causes: hunger, birth defects, substance abuse, accidents, wars, landmines, natural disasters, environmental damage and, ironically, medical advances that prolong life.

Let us not forget that we all live in the antechamber of the disability community. Anyone can enter it in an instant. Disability is a concern of every person on this planet.

Fortunately, the United Nations has addressed this silent crisis through its World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, now in its twentieth year. This disability programme is a marvelous example of the quiet side of the work of the United Nations away from the clamour and far from Security Council debates, but nevertheless vital to the mission of the Organization to improve the human condition. To strengthen the United Nations initiative, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Award was established at Roosevelt's home in Hyde Park, New York in 1995, on the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Organization. Since then, it has circled the globe to salute Member nations determined to expand participation of people with disabilities in their own societies. In the Award's first five years, the Republic of Korea, Canada, Ireland, Hungary and Thailand have been honoured.

Now, for the first time, the Award is being presented to a country in the Southern Hemisphere, and to a Latin American nation. I am certain that Ecuador's groundbreaking progress will inspire scores of other nations to include those with disabilities more fully in their development process. The Republic of Ecuador has long been determined to equalize opportunities for its citizens with disabilities. This commitment is reflected in a 1994 amendment to the Constitution, article 53 of which reads: "Along with society and the family, the Government assumes responsibility for the social integration and equality of opportunities for those with disabilities".

For such words, and for its vigorous actions to back them up, the World Committee on Disability is honoured to join with the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute and the United Nations in recognizing Ecuador. The Award is

accompanied by a $50,000 prize to further the work of an outstanding non-governmental disability organization within Ecuador, and by 1,000 wheelchairs for distribution in the country.

I congratulate President Noboa and his nation. We are proud to have him and Ecuador's beloved First Lady, Maria Isabel Noboa, join us to receive the Franklin D. Roosevelt Award today. And we are most pleased, Mr. President, that your very able Ambassador, the Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Luis Gallegos, has been named Chairman of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee on Disability.

As the first person using a wheelchair to ever address the United Nations General Assembly 20 years ago, I advocated passage of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons. I now say the time has come to move to the next level of protection and equalization of opportunity, to a United Nations convention on the rights of persons with disabilities. I call on the United Nations and all its Member nations to adopt this convention to speak anew for the future of people with disabilities worldwide. Not only will it lead to more forceful measures, but it will give confidence to those with disabilities as they seek to improve their own lives. The convention will bring great hope to those with disabilities everywhere.

Again we call upon the spirit of worldwide optimism and hope that is Franklin Roosevelt's legacy to the United Nations. I speak in that spirit today as we hold up Ecuador's progress for all nations and all mankind as a beacon of hope.